

Press release: Northern Ireland Finances

Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Rt Hon James Brokenshire MP, said:

People are understandably concerned about the impact on public services and on business because of the lack of an Executive.

What I am announcing to Parliament today is by no means a solution for the long-term. It is an interim step to keep Northern Ireland's finances functioning in the continued absence of devolved government.

In the Autumn, Northern Ireland must have a proper Budget in place to put its finances on a secure footing. Although we are not at that critical point yet, this is approaching.

I do not want to have to bring forward a formal Budget myself. I want that power to be exercised by those who should be exercising it: the Northern Ireland parties, who have been elected by the people of Northern Ireland to provide devolved government here. But should an Executive not be in place, however, the UK Government remains prepared to legislate to pass a formal budget, and to take any further steps as may be required to uphold political stability.

It should be for a power-sharing Executive to make use of the considerable spending power available to it and to address some of the big challenges facing Northern Ireland in the months ahead – not least in making Northern Ireland's voice heard clearly in the process of EU Exit.

An agreement is still possible, but the parties themselves have this within their own hands. We will continue to work with them over the summer, with the goal of getting the Northern Ireland Assembly up and running again.

Fundamentally, Northern Ireland's future is best served by local decision-making based on partnership and agreement. People want

firm answers on their jobs, their schools, their hospitals, their community resources. Continuing uncertainty is not fair on anyone.

[Press release: Groceries Code review notes significant cultural change in supermarket industry](#)

Small Business Minister Margot James has welcomed a positive relationship change between supermarkets and their suppliers, as she publishes the first [statutory review of the Groceries Code Adjudicator \(GCA\)](#) today (19 July 2017).

The review, which considered independent findings from YouGov alongside responses from trade associations, supermarkets and suppliers, found that the GCA, Christine Tacon CBE, has been effective in exercising her powers and enforcing the Groceries Code. Suppliers reported a positive change in their relationship with large retailers, as well as a major reduction in unfair trading practices. The number of suppliers who complained about being charged to remain on supermarkets' supplier lists fell from 30% to 9% between 2014 and 2016, while problems with incorrect deductions from invoices fell from 47% to 30% over the same period.

A number of respondents praised Ms Tacon personally, with one citing her "wealth of knowledge and skills". Another commented that she "holds an in-depth knowledge of the sector that is hugely beneficial.

Small Business Minister Margot James said:

This review highlights the excellent work of the Groceries Code Adjudicator over the past 3 years. It is vital that government and the GCA continue working together to prevent unfair treatment of smaller suppliers.

Poor supply chain practices have no place in an economy that works for all, and I want to thank Christine for her achievements in levelling the playing field and ensuring fair treatment of suppliers and retailers alike.

1. Established in 2013, the Groceries Code Adjudicator, Christine Tacon, is the UK's first adjudicator of the groceries industry, overseeing the relationship between the 10 largest supermarket chains and their suppliers.

2. In June 2017 Ms Tacon was reappointed for a second term in the role, in which she is responsible for ensuring large supermarkets treat their direct suppliers fairly and lawfully.

[News story: MOD launches Defence People Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy](#)

Tobias Ellwood, Minister for Defence People and Veterans, has today launched an innovative strategy to improve the mental health and wellbeing of the Armed Forces, their families, veterans, and Defence civilians.

While rates of mental disorder are slightly lower in the Armed Forces (3.2%) than in the general population (3.5%), the challenge of improving the mental health of the MOD's entire workforce is an important one. The Defence People Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2017-2022, launched by Mr Ellwood at an international conference with counterparts from the United States, Australia, Canada, and New Zealand, builds on five years of research and aims to build a coordinated approach to prevent, detect, and treat mental health and wellbeing issues, as well as introduce measures to promote the importance of mental health.

The new Strategy will include plans to:

- Encompass all Defence People – serving Armed Forces members (Regulars and Reserves), military families, veterans, and MOD civil servants;
- Introduce standardised mental health and wellbeing education and training for all those working in Defence;
- Invest in research on resilience training to ensure that individuals are as mentally fit as they can be to prevent depression and anxiety and monitoring of groups who are more likely to suffer from mental health issues, such as combat troops and medical personnel in support of them;
- Improve access to clinical assessment (such as through digital delivery) and prioritisation for treatment;
- Develop partnerships with key service charities in order to continue anti-stigma campaigning initiatives and share best practice;

- Improve communication to the workforce about what help is on offer.

Minister for Defence People and Veterans Tobias Ellwood said:

A fitter force is a more effective force and keeping our people healthy helps keep this country safe. This new strategy recognises the importance of mental health, alongside physical injuries and will improve the prevention, detection, and treatment of mental health issues which is vital to the wellbeing of our military.

I'm also delighted to host Ministers from some of our key partner nations, to consult and share best practice on veterans' issues.

Yesterday, ahead of the International Ministerial Conference on Veterans' issues held at Royal Chelsea Hospital, the Defence Secretary Sir Michael Fallon and Mr Ellwood attended a reception at No.10 Downing Street. This was held to bring the community that supports veterans together and was attended by several Chelsea Pensioners. It also provided an opportunity to provide an update on plans for the Invictus Games, which this year will take place in Toronto in September.

Tomorrow, Ministers will discuss how best to improve the transition into civilian life for veterans, including hearing how Governments may be able to use new technology to bring about new opportunities to make the transition smoother; the importance of partnering with the health and charity sector, and the Armed Forces Covenant.

Mr Ellwood and his international counterparts agreed that the sharing of ideas has an important part to play in building a greater common understanding of veterans' issues and that there must be an ongoing commitment to ensure support services continue to meet the needs of our serving personnel, their families and veterans.

Press release: Partners in innovation: HM Land Registry and Ordnance Survey

Today Lord Prior announces a new strategic partnership between HM Land Registry (HMLR) and Ordnance Survey (OS) to help propel the UK towards becoming a global leader in the land and property market.

The pilot partnership will see HMLR join OS at its Geovation Hub to encourage and support innovation and property technology (PropTech) businesses. Geovation is based at a dedicated location-data lab in London that supports and enables open innovation and collaboration across many sectors. The

[Geovation](#) mission is to expand the use of location and land and property data in the UK's innovation community.

Business Minister Lord Prior says:

The Geovation Hub is already making important contributions to a wide range of industries, including telecommunications, energy, transport and water management. Location-based data has a crucial role in future technology development and innovation from driverless cars to the internet of things.

The UK has a growing number of new entrants driving innovation in the housing sector. With HM Land Registry joining the Geovation Hub for the pilot scheme, the partnership offers great opportunities to further encourage and invest in the property-based technology (PropTech) start-ups of the future.

It also provides a platform to promote the use of data from both Ordnance Survey and HM Land Registry to deliver the Government's housebuilding agenda as part of our Industrial Strategy.

Participants in the new pilot programme will receive up to £20,000 in grant funding and a range of resources and services that will help them develop their businesses. Geovation provides the support that participants need, including access to experienced software developers, geospatial expertise from OS and property expertise from HMLR. Business mentors are also available to assist with business proposals and investor relationships.

This is not the first time HMLR and OS have collaborated to support innovation. In 2015, they came together for the Geovation Challenge, an annual competition which looks to address issues facing communities by means of location information. The challenge resulted in over £100,000 being awarded to three new ventures which used HMLR and OS data to create positive change in the housing industry. It is hoped this exciting new partnership will inspire and uncover more businesses like:

- Land Insight, who have made it faster and easier to assess land development opportunities
- Cityseer, who provide real-time insight into urban planning decisions
- Urban Intelligence, who provide property professionals with a single platform for all relevant site appraisal and planning policy information

Graham Farrant, Chief Executive and Chief Land Registrar of HM Land Registry, says:

This is an exciting partnership. Through combining our geospatial and property expertise, HMLR and OS will be supporting and encouraging disruptive forces in the PropTech and GeoTech markets. We expect to see benefits of this investment across the legal, financial and property sectors, stimulating growth for the wider economy and bringing more opportunities to the UK.

Nigel Clifford, CEO of Ordnance Survey, says:

We're delighted to welcome HMLR as a strategic partner in Geovation. Over the past decade, OS has led the way in making it easier for businesses to use its data and open data products. Through Geovation we're developing new models to encourage innovators, entrepreneurs and companies that are building the next wave of ground breaking GeoTech businesses. We're looking forward to collaborating with HMLR to develop the same for PropTech.

This month the Geovation Hub also celebrates two years of being open for business. In that time, 18 start-ups have been supported through the Geovation Programme, and more than 900 members have used the Hub's space and resources. Strategic partners have included Intel, IBM, DSTL, Nominet, Springwise, OGC, KPMG, and Dorsey.

Shipamax, one of last summer's programme companies, recently secured \$2.5m in investment from the Founders Fund. Recent funding successes include Flock who raised £500,000 and Pedals Delivery who raised £130,000.

For further information, interviews and images contact Keegan Wilson:

About Ordnance Survey

[Ordnance Survey](#) is Great Britain's mapping service. Our geospatial data serves the national interest by enabling a safe, healthy and prosperous society. Every day we support the delivery of efficient public services, support land management & planning, help protect our environment and underpin national security, infrastructure and emergency services. With our partners, we provide expertise and accurate location data and services to help create a resilient nation, ready for next-generation technology. We're driven to ensure Britain can build a world-leading digital and connected economy of the future.

About HM Land Registry

Established in 1862, [HM Land Registry](#) keeps and maintains the Land Register for England and Wales. With the largest transactional database of its kind, detailing more than 24 million titles, HM Land Registry underpins the economy by safeguarding ownership of many billions of pounds' worth of property.

News story: Consumers put at the heart of financial services revolution

The government is bringing in a new regulatory regime for innovative FinTech firms which will transform the way people engage with their finances and make it possible to manage all of their finances at the touch of a button.

From January 2018, these FinTech firms will – at the request of the individual – be able to access data from all of their bank accounts.

This could lead to innovations like managing all bank accounts from one easy-to-use app, enabling people to budget more effectively, or helping consumers avoid unwanted overdrafts by making automatic payments between bank accounts when funds are running low.

New innovative apps could provide personalised product recommendations based on exactly how consumers spend their money, such as suggesting which savings product would suit best based on an individual's saving habits.

Economic Secretary to the Treasury, Stephen Barclay, said:

Thanks to the changes we're making, new FinTech firms can enter the market and offer innovative and transformative banking services that are tailored to meet people's needs.

New apps will empower people to take greater control over their finances. Whether that's through managing all of their bank accounts in one place or helping to avoid unauthorised overdrafts when they have money elsewhere.

These changes stem from the EU's second Payment Services Directive and will drive further innovation in FinTech in the UK.

Giving people the ability to know exactly which products are best for them at a touch of a button will also drive competition in the financial services market.

Consumers will switch to the best product for them, and this competition will compel firms to provide better products. More competition will drive further consumer choice, and better and cheaper services.

Chief Executive of UK Finance, Stephen Jones, said:

We are excited by the potential for these reforms to enhance competition and innovation in the financial services sector – and

welcome the publication of these regulations which mark an important milestone on the journey towards implementing it.

The changes will allow customers to use details of their payments to help plan and manage their money better. What's more, this is just the start. There are a whole host of benefits for customers, many of which we are just beginning to see.